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Maryland Man Pleads Guilty to Perjury in Racketeering Case

WASHINGTON - Kenneth A. Cole, 40, pled guilty today in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia to one count of perjury for giving contradictory statements under oath about a drug trafficking conspiracy, announced U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr., John G. Perren, Acting Assistant Director of the FBI's Washington Field Office, and Cathy L. Lanier, chief of the Metropolitan Police Department.

The guilty plea from Cole, formerly of Hyattsville, was accepted by the Honorable Rosemary M. Collyer. Cole is to be sentenced January 13, 2011.

Cole faces a possible five-year sentence to run consecutively to a 10 ½ year sentence he is already serving for his role in a federal narcotics conspiracy. Cole was previously convicted of participating in a drug trafficking conspiracy involving the M Street Crew, a racketeering and drug enterprise that had taken over the 18th and M Street neighborhood of Northeast Washington and turned it into their own private marketplace for drug trafficking during 2000 to 2004.

Judge Collyer had presided over the federal trial and guilty pleas of various participants and drug suppliers to the M Street Crew, which led to the convictions of 41 persons.

Cole, also known as "Cricket," was one such crew member who in December, 2005, pled guilty and admitted to his participation in a drug trafficking organization known as the M Street Crew. After receiving the sentence of 10 ½ years for his role, and while serving his sentence, Cole agreed to testify as a defense witness for fellow M Street Crew member Larry Gooch. Gooch was facing a jury trial for his role in the same drug trafficking and racketeering enterprise.

At trial, in an effort to aid Gooch, Cole testified that the drug conspiracy did not exist, that the racketeering enterprise, "M Street Crew" did not exist, and that Gooch was not a participant. Those assertions under oath were directly contradictory to facts to which Cole had agreed during his own guilty plea. The two contradictory statements under oath formed the basis for his perjury conviction.

Gooch was eventually convicted by a jury in 2007 and sentenced to multiple sentences of life in prison without possibility of parole. Ironically, evidence presented in the trial of Gooch proved instances in which fellow M Street Crew members would come forward and commit perjury as defense witnesses in hopes of getting a jury to acquit.

The prosecution grew out of the investigative activities of a long-term FBI/MPD alliance called the Safe Streets Task Force. The Safe Streets Initiative involves more than 150 Safe Streets Task Forces around the country that combat street gangs by combining federal, state and local police resources. The task forces, which began in 1992 in Los Angeles and the District of Columbia, address gang activity including drug-related crimes. Sharing resources, manpower and intelligence allows federal prosecutors to focus on securing the maximum sentences and penalties for gang members found guilty. By working through a Task Force, investigators can focus on the entire criminal enterprise, instead of the prosecution of individual gang members.

The Safe Streets Initiative was funded in part by the Baltimore Washington High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area as well as the Department of Justice's Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force.

U.S. Attorney Machen, Assistant FBI Director Perren and MPD Chief Lanier commended the actions of the FBI Special Agent who led the investigative team along with MPD Detective Joseph Sopata. In addition, they commended Assistant U.S. Attorney John P. Dominguez, who sought the indictment of Cole for perjury and prosecuted the case against him.

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